

IN THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1. A method for monitoring a plurality of devices in a common environment,
2 comprising the steps of:
3 receiving usage information from one of the devices;
4 storing the usage information on a memory device of a computer;
5 using the computer to automatically access a remote database containing
6 information regarding the device;
7 transmitting the stored usage information to the remote database;
8 receiving the information⁴ from the remote database; and
9 generating an action to be taken by the device using the information from
10 the remote database and the stored usage information.
- 1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the usage information comprises:
2 an average length of time the device is in operation over a period of time;
3 a number of occasions the device is in operation over the period of time;
4 a number of times maintenance was performed on the device over the
5 period of time; and
6 types of maintenance operations that were performed on the device over
7 the period of time.
- 1 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the remote database is accessed by the
2 computer via an internet connection.

1 4. The method of claim 2 wherein the remote database is accessed by the
2 computer via a point-to-point connection between the computer and the
3 database.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of connecting is automatically
2 performed at regular intervals.

Sub
A² 1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the remote database is updated at
2 intervals using information generated by a manufacturer of a device of the
3 plurality of devices.

1 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are home appliances and
2 wherein the common environment is a house.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the devices are items of manufacturing
2 equipment and wherein the common environment is a manufacturing facility.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating a suggested action
2 comprises generating a written report.

Sub
A³ 1 10. A computer readable medium having stored thereon instructions which
2 when executed cause a computer to perform the steps of:
3 receiving usage information from one of a plurality of devices operating
4 in an environment;
5 storing the usage information on a memory device of the computer;

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